

The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM

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DEAR MEMBER,
The Christian News-Letter is fortunate in having friends who are willing to give generously of their best when the editor needs a rest. I offer my warmest thanks, and I am confident also yours, to those who have written the Letter while I have been away.

THE REVERSE IN AFRICA

Among the memories of the war which we shall not quickly forget is the black Thursday on which we waited with deepening anxiety for the Prime Minister to reveal the extent of the disaster in Africa, and for the further news that might arrive at any moment from the front. It makes all the difference to an experience of this kind whether we view it from a natural or from a religious standpoint. We have found ourselves, as the Prime Minister said, "in the presence of a recession of our hopes and prospects in the Middle East and in the Mediterranean unequalled since the fall of France." We feel that recession the more keenly because it involves not only the loss of thousands of brave men and masses of material, made and transported to the field of battle at great cost of human toil, but also the postponement, and perhaps the frustration, of what the Minister of Labour described in a recent speech as "the weaving of the great pattern that has now begun towards a new peace, a new civilisation, comradeship and new prosperity of the world."

At the time of writing there has been some improvement in the situation. But through anxious days we have had to face the possible loss of Egypt and the Suez Canal with the indefinite prolongation of the war which would inevitably result, and the danger is not yet removed. As our imagination traced out the darker possibilities, we found ourselves looking into an abyss.

The secret of the power of Christianity is that it does not shrink from the abyss. There is no more tragic experience conceivable than that which found expression in the cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" We are made aware in hours of defeat that life has dimensions of which we too easily lose sight when everything seems to be going well.

The intentions and hopes expressed by the Minister of Labour are echoed in countless utterances by the leaders of the United Nations. All men of good-will must share them. But every reversal of our plans reminds us that we live in a mysterious universe, in which there are forces at work that do not conform to men's notions of right and wrong.

Our Russian allies and we Anglo-Saxons may have different ideas of the kind of world we want after the war, but we both alike are inclined to take it for granted that we know what the world ought to be and that we have the power to make it such. Men have come to entertain the extraordinary notion that it is in their power both to choose the questions that they will ask and to find the answers. Reality has for them only two con-

stituents—man and the world, the latter conceived as material which man can shape according to his purposes. That is the monstrous illusion of modern times. Man is not free to ask what questions he will; he has questions put to him. Unexpected demands are made on him which there is no way of evading. Events take their course irrespective of human plans or wishes. We may deny God, but there is no escape from fate. There can be no recovery for the world till we get beyond the trivial view that everything can be brought within the compass of man's understanding and planning.

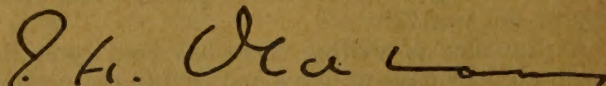
This truth is emphasised in this week's Supplement, in which we are reminded that life consists not merely, or primarily, in the things that we do but, fundamentally, in the things that are done to us. It is from our response to the things that are done to us that the most powerful action springs. It comes from a deeper level. In the discipline of disappointment our intentions and hopes for the future may be suffused with a new quality. We may learn the humility which will enable us to know and realize our true destiny.

FAMINE RELIEF IN EUROPE

We have received many enquiries from our members about the possibility of sending relief to the occupied countries in Europe and of opening a relief fund. A Famine Relief Committee has recently been formed under the chairmanship of the Bishop of Chichester for the purpose of obtaining and supplying information about conditions in Europe, and of sending food, vitamins and medical supplies, if and when this is permitted, for controlled distribution to children in the occupied countries of Europe. The Secretary of the Committee is Miss Edith Pye, Drayton House, Gordon Street, London, W.C. 1, to whom all enquiries may be addressed.

The writer of this week's Supplement is the Chaplain at Trinity College and Trinity Hall, Cambridge. When he was acting as A.D.C. to Tubby Clayton he helped to start and run Claridges Fleet Club for the British naval forces stationed at Alexandria during the war between Italy and Abyssinia.

Yours sincerely,



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